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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the issues of restructuring teacher education for general educators, special educators, and leadership personnel. The paper calls for preparing teachers in liberal arts, professional areas, and clinical experience. The pre-professional component should provide sound subject matter background. Professional education should then emphasize the study of teaching as an academic field, knowledge of pedagogy, classroom teaching skills, and values and ethical responsibilities. The clinical program should integrate the pre-professional components into rigorous experiences where formal knowledge is used as a guide to practical action. This segment should take place in a Professional Development Center. Competencies required of leadership personnel to function in preservice teacher education programs are outlined. (JDD)

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Restructuring Teacher Education: One Group's Perspective

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Defining the Issues

This paper focuses on the issues of restructuring teacher education for general educators, special educators and leadership personnel. Specifically, it discusses undergraduate, graduate and leadership program changes needed to meet the new challenges of preparing competent classroom teachers to educate today's youth.

Recruiting and selecting high caliber students to major in education is a key to improving the current educational dilemma. Specifically, teachers should be educated in liberal arts, professional education and have a rigorous clinical experience.

Pre-Professional. This component is concerned with the intellectual qualities of an educated, thoughtful and well informed individual. The intent is to provide professional educators with sound subject matter background. The pre-professional aspects of the program depend upon the prospective teacher having obtained a quality liberal arts education. The subject matter and concepts learned should provide the foundation for the information presented in the professional aspects of the program.

Professional Education. This component should be founded on scholarship and empirical research and emphasize the following:

1. The study of teaching and schooling as an academic field with its own identity.

2. The knowledge of pedagogy - students master the capacity to translate personal knowledge into inter-personal knowledge, used for teaching.

3. The skills and understanding implicit in classroom teaching - creating a communal setting where various groups of students can develop and learn.

4. The values and ethical responsibilities that distinguish teaching from other professions.

Clinical Experience. The clinical aspects of the program must integrate the pre-professional components into rigorous experiences where formal knowledge is used as a guide to practical action. This segment of the program should take place in a Professional Development Center (PDC) located in either a

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suburban, rural or urban school district. These centers should provide an environment where the most up-to-date, research-based instructional practices and programs can be observed and experienced by those preparing for professional careers in education. The Professional Development Center is a collaboration effort among school/university faculty and students to enhance public education. The partnership is founded on the premise that learners are the primary focus. The staff of the Professional Development Center should seek to achieve the following goals.

1. The best possible environment for student academic learning and personal self-fulfillment.

2. Opportunities for preservice and career-long professional learning and development of teachers.

3. Ongoing access to the best knowledge and talent related to student learning and development.

The need for infusion of teacher preparation curricula for preservice education majors must also be considered. Specifically, the following are recommended:

1. Early experiences in any teacher preparation program should be integrated with other experience. Early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school and special education majors should have a common core of course work/seminars/clinical experiences. A segment of this core should takeplace in a Professional Development Center.

2. Specialization should build on the integrated experiences of students and include a core of coursework/seminars/clinical experiences. A majority of students' study in their field of specialization should take place in a Professional Development Center. The infusion process should be enhanced during this experience, because students majoring in different fields will be provided an opportunity to interact with others participating in similar programs.

3. Clinical experiences should be rigorous and take place in Professional Development Centers. Early clinical experience should take place in an integrated setting, while latter experiences should be directly related to an individual's area of specialization. Students should have suburban, rural and urban clinical experiences prior to graduation. The Professional Development Centers should be a cooperative effort between university faculty and school districts staff and should include joint appointments.

Another area of concern relates to the preparation of competent leadership personnel to function in preservice teacher education programs. In this regard, leadership personnel should:

1. Be competent to function as teacher educators and should have applied experience and background.

2. Be role models and have the competency to function as a clinical professor.

3. Have the necessary competencies to work with others in Professional Development Centers.

4. Have the necessary competencies to deal with the dynamics of school politics.

5. Have the capacity to conduct applied research and use data and research results to solve classroom problems.

6. Have the ability to interact with regular educators and be a "team player" in the preparation of classroom teachers.

7. Be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

8. Be a generalist within the field of special education.

9. Have an interdisciplinary experience as an integral segment of their leadership preparation program.

10. Be competent to utilize the most up-to-date technology and research tools.

Recommendations

It is recommended that any university planning to restructure their teacher education program should consider the aforementioned suggestions. The structure of various teacher preparation programs may differ, but the following options are mandatory: (a) a four year undergraduate program, with students graduating with a bachelor's degree; (b) a five year program, with students graduating with a bachelor's and a master's degree; and (c) a one year program for students having achieved a bachelor's degree, with students graduating with a master's degree. Obviously, the proposed components of a restructured teacher education program can be modified to meet the needs of a specific college or university.

This preceding section also relates to restructuring leadership training programs. Thus, leadership training programs must take into consideration the competencies and experiences required of teacher educators to implement and conduct preservice preparation programs advocated for in this paper.